

# SPOKANENWORD

June  
Sixth Month  
2019



Spokane Friends  
1612 W Dalke  
Spokane, WA 99205  
(509) 327-7852  
[www.spokanefriends.com](http://www.spokanefriends.com)



## Sunday Schedule:

Doors Open at 9:00 a.m.  
Worship begins in stillness  
when first person sits down.  
Worship continues with song  
and messages 10:00 am  
Fellowship 11:00 am

Third Sunday of the Month:  
Monthly Meeting for  
Business begins at rise of  
worship.

## The Completeness of God

by Irv Brendlinger



Recently I talked with a friend who pastors a healthy, growing church. They have just added a woman staff member. When I asked how things were going (having a woman minister is innovative in his denomination), his response was enlightening to me. He said: "I sense that some needs are being met that were not before. While I bring my characteristics to ministry, she brings others, notably, nurture." He went on, "I believe that just as God had designed the human family to be inclusive about characteristics such as strength and nurture, so the body of Christ must have those elements in its leadership."

If the human family and the church are designed by God to be complete, without an overbalance of one trait, perhaps it is time for us to address the issue scripturally of the completeness of God.

A disclaimer is in order here: As soon as we begin to describe God, we've immediately limited ourselves to human terms. Rudolph Otto writes about God as "mystery," making a distinction between "problem" and "mystery." A problem is something that we can solve; a mystery is something that transcends our understanding.

The concept of God is not a problem we can solve, but a mystery that our finite minds are not able to fully grasp. Otto says, "God is mystery because God is beyond our apprehension and comprehension, not only because our human reason has certain ... limits but because ... we come upon something inherently 'wholly other' ...."<sup>1</sup>

God is so totally different from us that we cannot comprehend the nature of God, and when we try to describe God we immediately impose the limitations of our language, our culture, and all that we understand by our vocabulary. And yet, it's all we have. It's like the value of the metaphor, which gives us a word picture and sometimes opens new windows of understanding. But the problem of the metaphor is that it also establishes limits.

In spite of such limitations, let us look at some metaphors for God in hope of expanding our understanding of God. For so long, we have called God "Father," and rightly so for He is our Father. But we have forgotten to call God "Mother." Is God not also our mother? The issue is that of completeness. Elton Trueblood has pushed us to move beyond "either-or" (exclusive) thinking to "both-and" (inclusive) thinking. God can be both our "Father" and our "Mother." An extreme "feminist" reaction might be that since we

have called God "Father" for so long, we must now call God "Mother." An extreme "masculinist" reaction would counter that we can *only* call God "Father." Neither position is correct. God is not "either-or," but God is "all." We must not switch our thinking, but expand it. The error is not corrected by overreacting, but by increasing our perspective.

By limiting our thinking of God to the "Father image" we have made our understanding of God too small. We're not the first to do this. In Exodus 3 (the burning bush experience), God commissioned Moses to liberate the Jews. Probably shaking in his sandals, Moses asked: "Who shall I say sent me?" He was saying: "Tell me who You are because they'll want to know. What is your name?" The name in Hebrew culture implied characteristics and limits.

God's marvelous response was: "Moses, tell them that 'I Am' sent you!"

"Who?"

"I am who I am!" God was using the verb "to be," stating: "I will be what I will be. I will not give you a name that allows you to limit me." While Moses tried to bring God to the limits of his understanding, God indicates: "You cannot comprehend me. I am not limited to your titles, words, metaphors, or descriptions. If I give you a name, that will limit Me in your mind.

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I have no limits — not space, time, logic, characteristics, maleness, or femaleness. I am who I am, totally other from what you can comprehend." Isaiah 55:8, 9 says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Since we cannot limit our thinking about God to maleness, we might grow in our understanding by relating to God those qualities that we ordinarily see as feminine. Keep in mind that God transcends all those descriptions; God is *all* there is to masculinity and *all* there is of femininity. Following are some biblical images that reflect the side of God that we don't ordinarily think of: femininity.

Genesis 1:27 reads: "God created man [humanity] in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." The implicit truth of that passage is that maleness and femaleness are *both* in the image of God.

Two chapters later (3:21) we have a mothering image of God: "And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them." This is a picture of a mother making garments and clothing her children. This passage was written by a culture who for many centuries associated clothing making exclusively with the woman's role. Yet here, God is portrayed doing this.

Such nurturing imagery continues in the Old Testament. Nehemiah 9:21 remembers the 40 years of wandering: "... didst thou sustain them in the wilderness and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell." (RSV) Another time Moses angrily reminds God that it is God who is the "mother" of these people and not Moses. He is feeling overwhelmed with the responsibility (Numbers 11:12).<sup>2</sup>

Isaiah 49:15 asks: "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you." (NASB) The writer seems to be reflecting that the greatest experience of human love is that of a mother for her children, but God's love is greater than that! God's love is more reliable than what we normally consider the most reliable love.

One of the most graphic biblical images is that of the mother eagle protecting, caring for, and teaching her young. "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead [Israel]." (Deuteronomy 32:11-12)<sup>3</sup> We can take comfort in this image of the mother eagle teaching her young to fly and then swooping down if they fail, catching them, and lifting them to safety.

The eagle image is seen throughout Psalms (57:1; 61:4; 63:7). The psalmist says, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty .... He will cover you with pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge ... (91:1, 4) The eagle is the image of strength, but often in the Old Testament it is portrayed as the nurturing mother eagle."<sup>4</sup>

Such images are not restricted to the Old Testament. Luke contains the story of the prodigal son and the loving father as well as the story of the lost sheep and the loving shepherd. But sandwiched between those marvelous father images is the story of the lost coin and the woman who sweeps until she finds it. We can't simply ignore that Jesus was addressing a male-dominated Jewish society, and yet he cast God not only in the father and shepherd images, but also in the mother, housewife image.<sup>5</sup>

There is another image in John 3 where Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be "born again" of the Spirit. The image of God giving birth is clearly feminine. It is interesting to note that while the word for spirit in Greek (*pneuma*) is neuter, it is feminine in Hebrew (*ruach*). In the above cited passages we see each member of the Trinity represented: The "father" is shown as the mother who sweeps until she finds the lost coin; Jesus, the "son" as the mother hen, and the "Holy Spirit" as the one who gives birth.

All that we have been dealing with is "imagery," but it needs to be related to life. We have often said, "Think of the positive traits of your father and that tells you what God is like." It is time for the other side of the coin: We can also remember the positive images of our mothers to see a more inclusive picture of God. As I was doing this I recalled several incidents of my youth. One was the periodic Cub Scout Pack meetings. Dad was working out of town on those days but Mom was always there. I can still picture her sitting among other parents, couples, looking lonely and rather vulnerable. It was not a picture of "strength." But there she was, in my world, for me, nurturing by being there. Most clearly I remember the day Mom and I drove my sports car from Cincinnati to Frankfurt, Kentucky, and back. I was a college student (home on vacation) in charge of a Frankfurt high school Bible club. My TR 3 was in the process of recovering from an accident and was minus the front panel that held the headlights. The trip was fine, the activities were good, so good in fact, that I lingered too long in Frankfurt.

Mom, of course, was not aware of our dilemma until I stopped to buy flashlights. With darkness approaching fast and 40 miles of narrow winding Kentucky road to go, she encouraged me to "buy more than one light." Together we taped them to the front fenders and then cautiously proceeded. She never reprimanded me for my foolishness. She knew I was as tense as she and had learned my lesson. She only supported and encouraged me ... And bought more batteries. We must have been a curious sight to oncoming cars (which fortunately did not include the Highway Patrol variety). But we made it, together, and we've had many good laughs as we've relived that experience.

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I learned something about Mom that day, something that will stay with me always, and something that has taught me about the encouraging, supportive "being there" presence of God.

God is not only a strong father. God is the One who stays with us in our embarrassing emergencies, holding the flashlights, encouraging us, and adding humor to a tense situation. God is the mother hen who would gather Jerusalem under her wing, the mother eagle who swoops down to catch her young when they fail to fly, and God is the Spirit who gives us birth and nurtures us.

Those of you who are of the feminine gender, rejoice! You are like God. You express some of the qualities of God because you are made in God's image. For all of us, the Westminster Catechism says the chief concern of humanity is to love and enjoy God forever. We can best do that when we see God as our all in all, our strength *and* nurture.

1. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, Oxford University Press, 1923, p. 28.
2. Virginia Ramey Mollencott, *Women, Men and the Bible*, Abingdon, 1977, p. 56.
3. *Daughters of Sarah*, Nov/Dec 1981, Vol. 7, no. 6, pp. 17-18.
4. This nurturing quality of God is not inconsistent with what God expects of us in our dealing with others. A reading of Matthew 25 indicates that our eternal destiny is related to how we nurture those around us; feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned.
5. Mollencott, p. 58

**Irv Brendlinger** is Professor Emeritus of Church History and Theology at George Fox University and has served on the pastoral team at Reedwood Friends Church. He currently lives in Happy Valley, OR. Copyright: Evangelical Friends Alliance, *Evangelical Friend* magazine, October 1985, link to [http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/nwym\\_evangelical\\_friend/195](http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/nwym_evangelical_friend/195)

## MONTHLY MEETING FOR BUSINESS MINUTES 19 May 2019



The meeting was opened by Presiding Clerk, Jonas Cox. 11 people were in attendance. The April minutes were read and approved with one correction. The salary for Deborah Suess while she is here will be \$4500 a month plus \$500 for traveling expenses.

Treasurer's Report: The report was usual with good tithes and offerings for the month. Projects are being paid for. We have had several special donations designated for the downstairs womens bathroom.

Stewards & Trustees Report: There was flooding issues downstairs due to the recent rain storm and those have been taken care of.

Elder's Report: The AVP workshop was successful. We have considered the messages that have been brought to the pulpit over the past month. Deborah Suess will be here from August 12<sup>th</sup> through September 22<sup>nd</sup>. She wants to work full time while she is here. Some in the congregation would like to have more continuity by having the same person bring several messages in a row on Sundays. Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting is this Friday and Saturday, May 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. We have approved \$450 for traveling expenses. Paul Blankenship would like to attend.

New Business: Paul Blankenship has made it known that he would like to serve in a pastoral capacity for us. He also has had an offer in Seattle so would need a decision fairly soon. He is interested in pastoral care, education, and outreach. This may involve working with clients at Hutton Settlement and students from Whitworth and Gonzaga. We approved giving him a call for a year in this capacity at \$1,000 a month. This will be sent back to Elders to work out the details.

With no other old or new business and all hearts and minds clear, Anya Lawrence dismissed us in prayer.

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Nixon, Recording Clerk

## News from Caritas

Here are the Service Reports from April 201

Individuals served	902
Households served	358
Children (0-18)	282
Adults (18-54)	408
Seniors (55 & over)	212
Lbs of food distributed from Table of Plenty & Food Pantry	19,160
Emergency utility assistance	\$ 453.00
Hygiene & Cleaning Supplies	\$ 703.50
Fuel Vouchers	\$ 90.00
Bus Passes	2
Number of Volunteers	57
Volunteer Hours	641



### Summer Meal Kits for Kids is back!

Running all summer long from June 17<sup>th</sup> thru August 29<sup>th</sup>. Caritas is looking for donations of child friendly foods to include in weekly meal kits. Nearly 4,000 meals were distributed through this program last year; increasing access to healthy foods for growing bodies, minds, and souls

*Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, o build them up.*  
Romans 15:2 (NIV)

### *Kelsie Rowland*

**Thank you all for your support of our Boiler Room Fundraiser. We raised \$2,051 through ticket sales and Boiler Room purchases.**



## Caritas Community

### Yard Sale

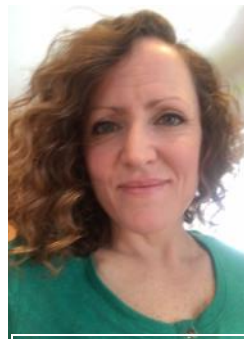
**Spokane Friends Parking Lot**

**Saturday, June 15th**

**8:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.**

Sell your treasures \$10.00 per spot or donate gently used items. To pre-register or drop off donations,

**Cancelled**



### Meet Tinarose Posey

We are pleased to announce that we have a new office manager. Tinarose's smile and voice will greet you next time you contact the Meeting Office. Tinarose has been married to husband Tigh for almost 10 years, and they have two beautiful

Jesus, her family, baking and working out. She also loves pushing herself physically and trying new things! We hope to meet her at potluck soon (since on Sunday mornings, she is very active in her own church). Lois Kiefhaber has reduced her hours — she will continue to work on the Newsletter and Website under Tinarose, who answers directly to the Elders. Welcome aboard, Tinarose!!



## Alternatives to Violence Project Workshop

Report by  
Anya Lawrence

The Alternatives to Violence workshop took place in our Meeting House May 3-5. It was led by Jane Simmons, a co-pastor of Unity Church of Spokane, Patrick Shemorry, and Danna Zahller. Participants included four of our members as well as four guests. It proved to be an intense eighteen-hour-long process that included in-depth exercises and discussion with interludes of play. The intent of the workshop is to increase participants' ability to interact with others with skill and composure in situations which may be fraught with disagreement, anxiety or even violence. Through different processes, we became more familiar with each other and ourselves, so that long-held issues which had kept us from being fully present began to be exposed.

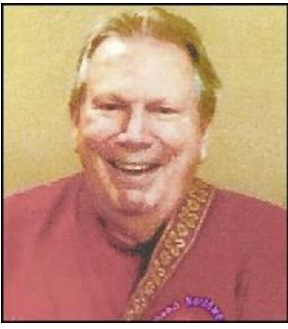
AVP teaches that transforming power happens through these principles: Respecting Self, Caring for Others, Expecting the Best, Thinking before Reacting, and Asking for a Non-violent Solution. These principles can best be achieved by:

- Seeking to resolve conflict by reaching for common ground.
- Reaching for that something good in others.

rs.

- Listening before making judgments.
- Basing your position on truth.
- Being ready to revise your position, if it is wrong.
- Expecting to experience great inward power to act.
- Risking being creative rather than violent.
- Using surprise and humor.
- Learning to trust your inner sense of when to act.
- Being willing to suffer for what is important.
- Being patient and persistent.
- Building community based on honesty, respect and caring.

Through role play, drama and dialogue, those in attendance found possibilities of communication that added significantly to their ability to diffuse difficult situations and to positively affect another's point of view. All present felt that the time spent was worthwhile and many felt inter-



## MILTON VERLE ASHER

1945 - 2019

Milton Asher was called to his home in heaven May 21, 2019. Milt was born on January 4, 1945, to Ida Patricia Jones and Buford Leroy Asher in Portland, Oregon. At age five he moved to WA County and joined his father making music for a radio program.

In grade six he saw a classmate playing guitar and told his father (who played guitar and fiddle) that he HAD to learn to play guitar! He never read music but "played by ear" many genres: country, 50s rock, jazz, classical, sacred, contemporary Christian, easy listening, and show tunes. From Bach to Bill Monroe — music was his true passion!

He graduated in 1963 from Forest Grove High School and then attended Oregon College of Education. He joined the Marines serving 3 years (1 in Vietnam). Agent Orange gave him heart problems, dementia, seizures, Parkinson's, etc.

In 1971 he married his honey Nadine Vanderau from Minnesota while she was teaching in the Forest Grove Schools. They chose a special name meaning "song" for their daughter "Sheera" in 1976.

Milt graduated in 1978 from Portland State with a degree in Business Administration. He worked as a reinsurance accountant and field auditor in Portland, Chicago, and Anchorage, and in Spokane where he worked for his own company until he retired. He was a long-time member of Spokane Friends, where he served as Elder and was the mainstay of Sunday morning worship music for many years. Always ready to hunt or fish, he took many friends on hunting trips to Alaska. When he got venison or moose, he learned to butcher it for the freezer with Nadine's help.

He had an enormous vocabulary and liked crossword puzzles. He enjoyed family, friends, fishing, hunting, and community theater. He became "papa" to three grands: Faith, Patience, Trinity and encouraged each to join him in making music. His band "Bluegrass Conspiracy," played for various gigs and made a CD. Another of his bands, "Crab Creek Wranglers," were familiar at Bloomsday races and garden shows. He was the Treasurer for Inland Northwest Bluegrass Music Association and for Blue-Waters Bluegrass Festival. He learned to play guitar, 12 string guitar, bass guitar, classical guitar, ukulele, mandolin, and harmonica. Now he can join others making music for Jesus.